



Senator Sheila Kuehl

23rd District
Newsletter
April 2005

Kathy Silverton Named "Woman of the Year"

Founder of Stitches from the Heart honored at the State Capitol.

Laura Plotkin
District Director

Kathy Silverton, founder and proprietor of Stitches from the Heart Yarn Shoppe, which produces hand-knitted and crocheted baby clothes for newborns whose parents cannot afford to purchase such items, has been named the 23rd State Senate District's Woman of The Year, 2005 by Senator Kuehl.

"Kathy Silverton is a true hero. She saw a need and took action. Now her vision has inspired thousands and helped hundreds of thousands more," said Senator Kuehl.



Senator Kuehl and "Woman of the Year" Kathy Silverton.

"Kathy Silverton is a true hero. She saw a need and took action. Now her vision has inspired thousands and helped hundreds of thousands more."

Ms. Silverton founded Stitches from the Heart after her daughter, Shane, told her about a newspaper story concerning babies being sent home from the hospital with only a diaper. Ms. Silverton began knitting baby clothes and sending them to hospitals. Soon her friends were helping out. After an article in the LA Times brought her work to public attention, Ms. Silverton received word from volunteers all over the country who wanted to help.

Now, eight years later, Stitches from the Heart coordinates, from its Santa Monica location, the work of over 5600 such volunteers, from throughout

the United States and Canada. Together, they have produced over 193,900 knitted and crocheted items, which they have sent to 432 hospitals and charities all over the country.

While continuing to help the very young, Stitches from the Heart now also helps senior citizens by donating yarn and other craft supplies to senior centers. The Shoppe also offers knitting classes and encourages its volunteers to form "Knitting Coffee Get Togethers" where they can create social bonds with one another while helping babies, and their families, get off to a good start.

Ms. Silverton was honored in Sacramento on March 14. Lieutenant Governor, Cruz Bustamente hosted a breakfast for the Women of the Year. Then, in the Senate Chambers, Senator Kuehl joined other State Senators in honoring a Woman of the Year from each district. Finally, First Lady Maria Shriver hosted a Woman of the Year reception. Ms. Silverton will also be celebrated at a luncheon in Santa Monica next month with Senator Kuehl. ❖

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Kuehl Chaired Oversight Hearings on Environmental Issues

Bill Craven

Chief Consultant, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water

Senator Kuehl recently chaired two legislative oversight hearings that signaled yet again her strong commitment to environmental issues. Many Capitol observers said the environmental hearing on March 2 may have been the most inspiring hearing they could recall. It was truly a rare event in which all five major environmental policy committees from the Senate and the Assembly convened to gather testimony from a panel of experts on various environmental issues.

The lead witness was Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. who showcased his brilliant oratory skills by speaking for nearly an hour on the failed environmental agenda of the Bush administration, the importance for California to reject the rollbacks of the federal government, and the urgent need for California to continue to lead the nation with state-level initiatives on air and water quality, habitat protection, and protecting communities of color from toxics. Kennedy did a great job of challenging the Schwarzenegger administration to take the lead in rejecting the anti-environmental priorities of the Bush administration.

Other witnesses spoke on a variety of topics that included: how to promote water use efficiency and conservation; how California's environmental laws drive the creation of jobs in the clean technology and energy sectors; how California's laws on environmental justice, although the best in the country, are still inadequate to protect some communities; emerging air quality and public health issues in the state; the importance of enforcement in achieving environmental protection; land use opportunities facing the state; and creative and new ways to protect the urban environment through urban forestry and watershed programs.

Two days later, on March 4, Senator Kuehl co-chaired a hearing with Assemblymember Fran Pavley in Los Angeles. Both chair Budget Committee subcommittees on the environment. The hearing focused on the economic and social values of California's air, coast, and ocean. Sen. Kuehl chaired the water segment of the hearing and

Assemblymember Pavley chaired the air quality segment. The relationship between ocean water quality and the ability of the public to enjoy the shore was a focus of the hearing. Numerous speakers from a variety of perspectives testified. Environmental advocacy groups, a regional water board, and the Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau were represented.

“Assemblymember Pavley and I wanted to focus on our irreplaceable coastline and the relationship of ocean health, onshore health, and human health.”

Very compelling remarks were delivered by Yvon Chouinard, the president and founder of Patagonia, the outdoor clothing and products company, was outspoken in his defense of aggressive coastal protection. He said he was saddened by the short-sightedness of some in the business community who attack environmental legislation as “bad for the economy.” Several speakers, including Chouinard, made the point that coastal preservation and ocean water quality are non-negotiable and are essential for the growth of the California economy.

In the air quality portion of the hearing, witnesses spoke eloquently on the need to reduce diesel pollution from ports, the environmental justice questions posed by air pollution and the community effects of air pollution in communities that have a large percentage of Latino or African-American residents. Several of the witnesses had specific recommendations that Senator Kuehl and Assemblymember Pavley will take into account in budget deliberations and in policy bills in the Legislature. ❖

Senator Kuehl Chairs the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water and the Budget Subcommittee on Resources and Environment.

Closing In on the SOKA Aquisition

Laura Plotkin
District Director

We are getting closer to the culmination of our local park agencies' number one priority acquisition in the Santa Monica Mountains—the 588-acre SOKA property in Malibu Canyon. Its location between Malibu and the West San Fernando Valley and its wide flat expanse, surrounded by lush green hillsides, makes it our regional crown jewel and the actual center of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

This proposed public parkland is flanked by Malibu Creek State Park on the west and National Park Service's Diamond X Ranch on the east and is located on the site of the ancient Chumash village, Talipop. It is part of the Malibu Creek Watershed and rests on a designated Scenic Highway. The purchase of the property represents a serendipitous moment in time where all the parties have come together with the will and the finances to make this acquisition happen.

The wonderful partnership of a willing seller and virtually all levels of government--the National Park Service, State Parks, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, LA County, our local cities and nonprofits and includes a private fundraising effort from citizen-supporters led by Mountains Restoration Trust--has been essential to the process. Many groups and individuals have joined in an effort to protect this magnificent resource in order to guarantee that the dream of the past 25 years to save it will soon be a reality.

As part of the agreement, the City of Malibu will continue to be able to use the ballfields at Bluffs Park and generations of park users will have the pleasure of hiking along the trails and hillsides of this new addition to the public park system on the SOKA property. There will be ample opportunities for the public to give input at hearings designed to generate a plan for the park's uses and maintenance. Thank you to all who are helping to bring this about. ❖



SOKA property in the Santa Monica Mountains

Senator Kuehl's Committee Assignments

Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata has appointed Senator Kuehl to the following committees for the 2005-06 Legislative Session:

Standing Committees:

- ◆ Natural Resources and Water (Chair)
- ◆ Budget and Fiscal Review
- ◆ Environmental Quality
- ◆ Government Modernization, Efficiency and Accountability
- ◆ Health
- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Labor and Industrial Relations

Subcommittees:

- ◆ Budget - Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources and Environment (Chair)
- ◆ Health - Aging & Long Term Care
- ◆ Health - Stem Cell Research Oversight
- ◆ Natural Resources & Water – Delta Resources

Select Committees:

- ◆ School Safety (Chair)
- ◆ Health Insurance Crisis in California (Chair)
- ◆ California Correctional System
- ◆ Developmental Disabilities & Mental Health
- ◆ Perchlorate Contamination

SB 840: Reliable Health Care That We All Can Count On

Senator Sheila Kuehl

The time for true reform of our health care system is here. Nearly 1 in 5 Californians are now uninsured, insurance premiums continue to skyrocket at alarming rates, and many employers are decreasing or dropping health benefits for their workforce and retirees. The rise of high-risk health plans, characterized by their expensive deductibles and co-pays, has been associated with a drastic rise in bankruptcies. So called 'high-deductible' health plans are the final death rattle of a crumbling health care system, one which now fails to keep even insured families out of bankruptcy when they experience a serious illness. Despite the fact the United States spends more than twice as much as most other industrialized nations, we remain the only industrialized nation to leave 20% of our population without insurance and to allow patients to go bankrupt when they get sick.

In response to California's overwhelming need for an overhaul of our health care system, I have authored SB 840, The California Health Insurance Reliability Act (CHIRA). SB 840 provides fiscally sound, affordable health insurance coverage to all Californians, provides every Californian the right to choose his or

her own physician and controls health cost inflation.

SB 840 establishes a streamlined finance system for health care in California, allowing the state to consolidate the administrative functions of thousands of different insurance companies and plans into one comprehensive insurance plan saving businesses, consumers and the state as a whole, billions of dollars in the first year. Additionally, SB 840 directs the state to use its enormous purchasing power to achieve the same deep discounts for prescription drugs that all other industrialized nations receive.

Covered benefits under the bill include hospital, medical, surgical, and mental health; dental and vision care; prescription drugs and medical equipment, such as hearing aids; emergency care including ambulance; diagnostic testing; and hospice care and much more.

SB 840 (CHIRA) offers a strong vision for a modernized health care system that will provide high quality, affordable and reliable health care for all residents. I urge you to support the California Health Insurance Reliability Act of 2005. ❖

For more information contact Sara Rogers at (916)445-1353 or Judy Spelman at (916) 322-1680.

Emergency Road Repair Update

Topanga Canyon Boulevard (State Route 27) and Pacific Coast Highway (State Route 1)

Senator Sheila Kuehl

Two main arteries in the 23rd Senate District have been seriously impacted by recent storms in Southern California. This has made traveling in the canyons, and along the coast, very difficult for many of my constituents. Businesses, particularly in Topanga, have been hurt because of the difficulty of getting in and out of Topanga Canyon.

My office has been in frequent contact with CalTrans to encourage them to expedite the repair work, keep traffic flowing as smoothly as possible and provide the public with the most current information how the repair work might impact motorists.

Topanga Canyon Blvd. was closed on January 10 between Pacific Coast Highway and Grandview Drive in Topanga due to storm damage from mud-

slides, flooding and a large boulder that slid onto the roadway. The storms washed out pavement and undermined the road, making the road too dangerous to open to motorists. Temporary repairs were completed, and on January 17, the road was opened to one-way traffic during restricted hours. On February 1, those hours were extended to provide for two-way traffic.

Currently, Topanga Canyon Boulevard between PCH and Grandview is open to two-way traffic between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and from 3 p.m. and 11 p.m. Only one lane at a time can pass by the construction site; flagmen are stationed at the location to direct traffic so that a greater number of southbound cars can pass through during the morning commute and reversing that in the evening.

Road Repair Update continued on page 7.

Senator Kuehl's 2005-2006 Legislation

Senator Kuehl is authoring the following legislation for the 2005-06 Legislative Session. Visit www.leginfo.ca.gov to get updated information on the status of these bills.

SB 51: Tenants Rights, 60-Day Notice. SB 51 deletes the sunset date on the statute that requires that notice of termination of tenancy be served 60 days in advance in order to terminate a periodic tenancy in situations where the tenant is not at fault.

SB 180: The Human Trafficking Collaboration and Training Act. SB 180 establishes, for the first time, a statewide response to human trafficking. It creates the California Alliance to Combat Trafficking and Slavery (California ACTS) Task Force and provides training opportunities on human trafficking for peace officers and health care providers.

SB 300: Family & Medical Leave Protections. SB 300 enhances the protections under the unpaid California Family and Medical Leave Act, so that family members do not have to face the heart breaking choice between their job and caring for a seriously ill family member.

SB 366: Women Prisoners. SB 366 makes significant changes to areas of the corrections system affecting women and children. It ensures that long overdue changes are made that will reduce recidivism among female prisoners and increase the likelihood that children of prisoners succeed.

SB 400: Tobacco Sales to Underage Minors. SB 400 strengthens and cleans up California's tobacco licensing law to provide real consequences to retailers who sell tobacco to under age minors.

SB 466: Photo Enforcement of Traffic. SB 466 (Kuehl) will enhance public safety and reduce the number of accidents and fatalities due to speeding, by providing clear authorization for cities and counties, in cooperation with a local law enforcement agency, to put in place a mobile photo radar enforcement system in neighborhoods that opt in.

SB 493: Cal Learn and Pregnant and Parenting Teens. SB 493 strengthens the Cal-Learn program, which helps pregnant and parenting teenagers to complete high school, by implementing a transitional compliance period and designating specific eligibility workers who will manage the aid applications of pregnant and parenting teens.

SB 496: Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA) Program. SB 496 improves the MAA program for

school districts and other educational entities by establishing a competitive bidding process for the regional agencies that hold contracts to administer the program for schools. The MAA program provides supplemental Medicaid dollars to educational entities performing specified administrative functions for students eligible for Medicaid.

SB 500: Dependent Minor Parents. SB 500 strengthens the relationships between dependent minor parents and their children by ensuring that children of dependent minor parents are not considered at risk solely because of the parent's age or their dependent status. The bill also provides enhanced funding for dependent minor parents and their children.

SB 538: Workers Comp & Quality Control. SB 538 provides oversight for medical provider networks (MPN's) established by recent workers compensation reforms to ensure that such networks demonstrate their capacity to adequately serve the number of employees they are certified to cover. The bill additionally establishes a Quality Assurance Program similar to health care organizations that provide workers compensation medical services.

SB 646: Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control. SB 646 prohibits waivers of regulation for pollutants that cause water bodies to fail Clean Water Act standards. Additionally, SB 646 ensures enforcement with adequate funding from fees and ensures that routine enforcement mechanisms such as clean up and abatement orders and cease and desist orders can be applied to waiver conditions.

SB 658: Coastal Mitigation Vehicle Fee. SB 658 would create an opt-in program for coastal and San Francisco Bay Area counties to use in generating a reliable state-local partnership funding source for projects that mitigate for the effects of motor vehicles and their related infrastructure on the coastal environment.

SB 660: Parental Right to Be Present During Questioning. SB 660 provides a means for parents, schools and law enforcement to work together by furnishing parents the opportunity to be present during the questioning of their child at school.

Legislation continued on page 6.

Legislation continued from page 5.

SB 668: Mining Reform. SB 668 strengthens the ability of the state to obtain financial assurances and reclamation plans from mining operators. It makes several other changes in the surface mining law to minimize California's reliance on imported sand and gravel, define when owners of land may be responsible when mine operators default on their obligations to the state, and includes a definition of "reclamation plan" in the law for the first time.

SB 720: Domestic Violence Restraining Orders. SB 720 makes several changes to California's domestic violence restraining order statutes. The bill makes the courts responsible for entering Family Court domestic violence restraining orders into the Domestic Violence Restraining Order System (DVROS) and authorizes the District Attorney or City Attorney to bring criminal contempt actions for violations of Family Court restraining orders.

SB 820: Water Management and Planning. SB 820 strengthens water conservation policies, reduces uncertainty about the use and abundance of our water resources, and increases the integrity and integration of state and local water resources planning and management.

SB 840: California Healthcare Insurance Reliability Act. SB 840 establishes universal health care in California through a streamlined finance system that rolls the wasteful administrative functions of thousands of insurance companies into one efficient and comprehensive plan. SB 840 provides reliable, affordable and high-quality health coverage for all Californians regardless of job status, income level, or a pre-existing condition while preserving the right to choose one's own physician.

SB 857: Salmon & Caltrans. SB 857 would require Caltrans to complete surveys of its coastal stream/road crossings to determine their ability to let migratory fish pass up and down stream. It would also require an annual report on agency activities regarding mitigating their barriers to fish passage.

SB 932: Hospital Peer Review. SB 932 establishes an impartial independent peer review process within hospitals by using independent judicial review organizations to make peer review decisions with the intent of improving the timeliness, impartiality, and quality of hospital peer review.

SB 973: Domestic Partners Retirement Benefits. SB 973

provides a process for government employees who retired prior to the enactment of major domestic partner legislation to elect the retirement benefits options now provided equally to spouses and domestic partners who retire from government service. ❖

Community Workshop on Gang Violence in Santa Monica - Part II

**Saturday, April 9, 2005
9 a.m. to 12 noon
John Adams Middle School
2425 16th Street**



At the invitation of the City of Santa Monica and State Senator Sheila Kuehl, 400 people came together on February 26 in a community of stakeholders who care deeply about the quality of each young life in Santa Monica. We began a dialog that day, with the help of a panel of experts, on proposed community solutions to reduce gang violence in the Pico neighborhood and to reduce its effects on the entire community.

On April 9, the work continues as we turn those ideas into action steps in four major areas identified on February 26.

Please join with youth, parents, clergy, neighbors, educators, youth workers, business people, and community organizations to make a difference. If you did not attend on February 26, you can still lend your time, expertise and energy to the action planning event and the implementation that will follow.

Registration is not required, but is encouraged. Breakfast, child care (age 5 and up), Spanish translation, and free parking once again will be provided. To RSVP and for more information on what occurred at the February 26 community workshop, visit www.StopGangViolence.smgov.net.

John Adams Middle School is accessible to persons with disabilities and is served by Big Blue Bus lines 8 & 11. To request a disability-related accommodation, please call (310) 458-8701 or TTY (310) 458-8696.

Senator Sheila J. Kuehl

23rd District, California State Senate

I am always happy to hear from my constituents about any State-related matters, such as experiences with State agencies, ideas for new legislation, and information about issues, etc. You are welcome to phone, write or send me an email. E-mails will be acknowledged; but, since we get hundreds, sometimes thousands, a day, if you are a constituent and you'd like a personal answer, please phone or write. I love serving you in the legislature and look forward to all the good work we can do together.

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Visit my website: www.sen.ca.gov/kuehl

My website is where you can find out about my activities within the 23rd Senate District. You can download the press releases, fact sheets for my legislation, my essays on current state governmental issues, and the monthly 23rd District newsletter.

Road Repair Update continued from page 4.

The restricted hours allow CalTrans to accomplish as much work as possible while allowing motorists access to the route. The current hours, which were recently extended, are expected to remain in effect for the duration of the project.

The Topanga Canyon project consists of construction of a 180 foot long retaining wall and 120 soldier piles, and shoring of an existing water line, all of which have been completed. Still to be completed are backfilling the wall, roadway replacement, roadway re-striping and installation of a new guardrail. The cost of the repairs on Topanga Canyon is estimated at \$1.27 million and completion is projected for the middle of May.

On March 8, 2005, **Pacific Coast Highway**, our fragile coastal route, was hit with yet another significant problem. A major crack formed in the slope adjacent to PCH, between Topanga Canyon Boulevard and Coastline Drive, creating a high potential for a landslide. Because of risks to motorists, the two northbound lanes had to be closed, with only one lane available in each direction. Once construction got underway, CalTrans was able to open a third lane. Currently, during morning commute hours, northbound traffic is reduced to one lane and south-

bound traffic has two available lanes. In the afternoon and evening hours, there are two lanes for northbound traffic and one for southbound. To adjust for weekend traffic, weekend hours for the reversible lane is as follows: two northbound lanes are open from Friday at noon until 2 pm on Saturday, two southbound lanes are open from 2 pm on Saturday until 10 pm on Saturday, and 2 northbound lanes are open from 10 pm on Saturday until 2 pm on Sunday.

To stabilize the slope, approximately 3000 truck loads of dirt on the cliff over PCH had to be removed; this work is now complete. Currently, the bulk of the work involves hauling the dirt off-site. The contractor is utilizing 25 trucks and hauling dirt about 14 hours a day. Recent rains, disposal site operating hours and a shortage of available trucks are all having an effect on the project completion time. Once the dirt has been removed from the location, rock netting will be installed. Pending the final geological report, there may be a future project that involves the installation of a retaining wall. CalTrans has told me that they are hopeful that the project will be completed by the end of April.

Laurie Newman is available to answer any questions or to provide current updates on the status of these emergency transportation projects. She can be reached at (310) 441-9084. ♦